American Studies (AMSJ)
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Overview

American Studies (AMSJ) is interdisciplinary journal that published quarterly by the Mid-America American Studies Association, with its first issue published in 1960. The journal has four sponsors: the Mid-American America Studies association, the University of Kansas College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Department of American Studies, and KU Libraries. The journal aims to present controversial perspectives on a wide spread of topics. In special issues, the journal concentrates on a single topic. Overall, the journal is interested in publishing authors whose input differs from the status quo.

American Studies merged with American Studies International (ASI) in 2005, which caused AMSJ to publish one or more issues a year that is or are (respectively) centered on international authors and transnational scholarship. Many features of ASI have been adapted into AMSJ. The journal is issued quarterly, though two issues are occasionally published simultaneously as a double issue. An example of this would be the Fall/Winter 2008 issue of the journal.

Beyond scholarly articles, American Studies also publishes book, film, and exhibit reviews. These reviews go into depth of American culture while breaking traditional ways of thinking. The authors of these reviews are written by professors, independent scholars, and professionals who possess great expertise in their realm of study.

The typical issue consists of five scholarly articles twenty to twenty-five pages in length, while double issues contain twice the number of articles. After the article section is the “Reviews” section, which contains around thirty single-page reviews (detailed above). Yearly print subscription normally costs thirty-five dollars regularly but costs only twelve dollars for students. The subscription is required if an individual wants access to the most recent three years of issues. All issues older than three years are available through the AMSJ website for free.

Recent Trends

The overarching focus of American Studies (ASMJ) is a focus on American society and history, but there are three sub-trends that find themselves at home within the journal. The first is a focus on different racial and minority groups within the United States. These articles range from topics on art to literature, but they all have the underlying focus of a minority group finding its niche within the United States. Many of the articles take a Marxist approach on the topic, focusing on the differences in class between the white majority and the minority. Other articles take a historicist approach, speaking about how the minority was treated due to events occurring during the time period.
The second theme that persists within *ASMJ* is the journal’s inclusion of articles that focus on the United States’ relationships with other countries. Articles look at these relationships from both historical and modern standpoints about events in any era. Some articles portray the ways individuals in other countries view the United States. Other articles take a look at how people from both inside and outside the country view historical and modern U.S. events as well as their effects on the population.

The final theme within the journal is a focus on American politics. *ASMJ* has many articles that talk about the effects of political matters of both past and present on the people of the United States. This theme is often present within the racial and minority articles due to the many political decisions that have been made on and for minorities. However, this theme deserves its own discussion since the overlap is minor.

*ASMJ* occasionally runs special issues that focus on one specific topic or event in American history. The three main themes are still present within these special issues.

**Representative Article**

Since a significant number of articles within *American Studies* discuss race and integration within the United States, a good representative article would be “*Chinatown's Tourist Terrain: Representation and Racialization in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco*” by Barbara Berglund. In the article, Berglund takes a modified Marxist view concerning the tourism in San Francisco’s Chinatown from the late-1800’s to the mid-1900’s. Like other *ASMJ* articles, Berglund mixes Marxist ideas with historical criticism. In effect, she goes into detail how the effects of social classes and the time period affected the viewpoints, emotions, and lives of both tourists and residents in the Chinatown. The combination of historical and Marxist criticism is common within the journal, especially in racial and minority pieces.

This combination allows for an explanation concerning the difficulties that these groups had and are still having in integrating into American society. In the article, Berglund explains how the growing amount of tourist literature in the late 1800’s highlighted and “racialized the Chinese in terms of their unassimilability, their proclivity towards vice, the risks they posed to public health, and the threat they presented to free white labor.” She notes how such claims and unflattering stereotypes were formed to draw middle class tourists to Chinatown. She goes on to explain that the increase in tourism rendered the Chinese even more incapable of integrating themselves into society since they became viewed as sideshow attractions instead of as people. The way Berglund interpreted her research is a common approach to how other authors within the journal interpret theirs.

**Recommendations for Student Researchers**

*ASMJ* is extremely useful for student researchers who want provocative viewpoints over topics. The majority of authors cover their respective topics beyond the status quo. The diversity of the editorial board ensures that the articles are not culturally static. The broad variety of topics in the typical issue provides the opportunity for student researchers to be introduced to multiple topics.
in different ways. Students can learn and criticize unfamiliar viewpoints within their research from this journal.

Also, the journal is exceptionally helpful when a student is researching a topic covered in a special issue. All of the articles within the special issue focus on a single topic. As such, there are several unique viewpoints that may conflict with each other. The nature of the journal enables for researchers to attain an incredible scope of viewpoints as they become familiar with conflicting yet still sensible viewpoints, perspectives, and cultural norms.

One of AMSJ’s detriments for student use is that it requires a subscription for access for the most recent three years, as mentioned above. However, students can utilize Journals@XU on Xavier University’s library website to access all issues. Students would have to search for exact match “American Studies” and click on the “Humanities Full Text (H.W. Wilson)” link to a database that contains full access to issues from years 1983 through the present. If a student does not have access to Journals@XU, then he or she would need to pay the twelve dollar subscription fee to access the most recent issues. If neither option is viable for students, then the students would have to limit their search to the older issues.

In addition, most issues of the journal do not have a specific topical focus. If a student is researching a specific topic, then he or she would have to browse through the archives of the website to find an article that pertains to his or her area of study. Unless their topic is covered in one of the special issues, then it may be difficult for a student to do so. The student would need to browse the Table of Contents of issues to look for a relevant title. Students must view each article in individual PDF files since full issues cannot be accessed as one, all-encompassing PDF file.